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ABSTRACT

The author maintains that IQ testing developed in a political context and still serves to descriminate against minority group gifted children; he suggests a method of identifying potentially gifted disadvantaged children by using culturally familiar experiences. The discriminatory aspects of intelligence testing are evidenced by quotes from L. Terman and analysis of U.S. immigration policy. Examples are given of cultural differences in the definitions of familiar words. Briefly described is the Stallings Environmentally Based Screen which evaluates recall, depth of information and detail, and abstract thought by using content determined by the psychometrist at each individual school. Educational programs are encouraged to gradually blend experiences from the child's immediate environment into the general school curriculum. (DB)

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CONTEMPORARY IDENTIFICATION AND PROGRAM MODELS FOR GIFTED THIRD WORLD CHILDREN

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ECOP 2930

On the otherwise unmemorable day, Wednesday, March 18, 1959, the Times of London printed the following letter to the editor:

> Sir: Among the "odd one out" type of questions which my son had to answer for a school entrance examination was: "Which is the odd one out among cricket, football, billiards, and hockey?"
>
> I said billiards because it is the only one played indoors. A colleague says football because it is the only one in which the ball is not struck by an implement. A neighbour says cricket because in all the other games the object is to put the ball into a net; and my son, with the confidence of nine summers, plumps for hockey "because it is the only one that is a girl's game." Could any of your readers put me out of my misery by stating what is the correct answer, and further enlighten me by explaining how questions of this sort prove anything, especially when the scholar has merely to underline the odd one out without giving any reason?
>
> Perhaps there is a remarkable subtlety behind it all. Is the question designed to test what a child of nine may or may not know about billiards--proficiency at which may still be regarded as the sign of a misspent youth?
>
> Yours faithfully,
>
> T. C. Batty

Professional conferences in recent years often leave its participants confused and bewildered. Those participants who attend conferences for alternative ideas are often vocal between sessions expressing the frustration that far too many sessions conclude as they began with "we have a problem." Since we are in a bicentennial year, let 1976 end the "we have a problem" era and begin the era of, "we don't have a problem until we start to do something about it."

The real issue with culturally different gifted children is that they are perceived as a problem. Educators and psychologists have set a tone not unlike that which Kamin describes in his book The Science and Politics of I.Q. As Chairman of the Psychology Department at Princeton University, Kamin produces strong evidence that the fathers of psychology --Yerkes, Terman and Goddard--were far more political than scientific in attempting to link low levels of "innate intelligence" to criminality and poverty. Following their rationale I.Q. testing in this country was used in the deterrence of certain ethnic groups from immigrating--namely, southern Europeans, Jews and Orientals.

Terman felt so strongly about the issue of immigration and need for this country to select certain ethnic groups that he wrote: "In the near future intelligence tests will bring tens of thousands of these high-grade defectives under the surveillance and protection of society. This will ultimately result in curtailing the reproduction of feeble-mindedness

and in the elimination of an enormous amount of crime, pauperism and industrial inefficiency. It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the high-grade cases, of the type now so frequently overlooked, are precisely the ones whose guardianship it is most important for the state to assume."

The test, in Terman's view was particularly useful in the diagnosis of "high-grade" or "border-line" deficiency. That is, and I quote again, "I.Q.'s in the 70-80 range is very common among Spanish, Indian and Mexican families of the Southwest and also among Negroes. Their dullness seems to be racial, or at least inherent in the family stocks from which they come . . . the whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew and by experimental methods. Terman predicts that when this is done there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences in general intelligence, differences which cannot be wiped out by any scheme of mental culture.

"Children of this group should be segregated in special classes. They cannnot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers. There is no possibility of convincing society that they should not reproduce. Although from a eugenic point of view they constitute a gross problem because of their usually prolific breeding."

It must be noted according to Kamin that Terman did not draw a distinction between races but the very poor of all colors. But the tone had been set.

Both Goddard and Yerkes supported Terman's theory. Yerkes later played a significant role in the continuation of this tone. Yerkes, who later became President of the American Psychological Association believed that intelligence belonged to Nordic types of people and to further populate this country with other groups would weaken the nation.

The third utilization according to Kamin was "the poverty mess." That is, attributing responsibility for continued poverty of certain groups to low intelligence levels.

The culturally different child experiences much the same kind of selection process as those "inferior" groups of people who wanted to immigrate to the United States. He is not only seen as different but as not measuring up to the majority culture child. Such teacher perception and resulting behavior determines how the child is selected, educated and evaluated.

The move for all professionals in gifted education must be the development of a certification model by third world people to select those professionals who are qualified to work with the culturally different child. With this in mind I am stating that the ideas I express in the identification and program section of this paper are an alternative direction that deserves serious consideration.

Identification

I cannot support the continuing political view that

one race or group of people genetically are endowed with a disproportionate degree of intelligence. The flaw in what we refer to as intelligence occurs in what a culture chooses to value or measure. When we refer to the term intelligence in this country we are measuring the cultural values of western and northern European people. Kamin found considerable support for this position in his investigation of our early immigration policies. It is surely non-scientific to develop a test instrument whose purpose is to exclude certain ethnic groups from this country on the basis of race and ethnic background. There seems to be no evidence in the standardization of intelligence tests for immigration purposes that the standardization group used to develop the instrument was other than northern and western European people. It then becomes reasonable to assume that when the test is administered that non-western and northern Europeans would not be able to compete. Nor was there further investigation to determine that there might be a degree of difference in the duration of time immigrants had been in this country and an increase in I.Q. level. The above mentioned policies occurred in 1911 and in 1976 the process remains the same. We are still penalizing culturally different children in testing.

If the culturally different child misses a test item because he or she didn't know the definition of a word they are penalized but for the wrong reason. Too often children miss test items and are eliminated because of unfamiliar

material. Allowing the content of a test instrument to be words and concepts that the child has experienced allows the culturally different child to miss the item for the right reason. If the child misses an item with familiar information we can conclude that the child could not handle the level of reasoning or abstract thought necessary to complete the task.

In focusing on familiar material we are minimizing the effect and impact of language and giving the child the opportunity to not be penalized by language, but to attack abstract thought, creativity, and any higher level of mental process. Language is only a vehicle within a culture that transports the individual to higher levels of mental thought. It is not the end, only the means. It is measurement of language in I.Q. testing that puts middle and upper income children in gifted classes. Professionals who develop tests are not from the three- to five-thousand dollar income bracket. The language used is not only language loaded but socially loaded. For example, subsidy is welfare, an entrepreneur is a hustler, cool means cold, cool also means a person who is together, a trick is not necessarily by a magician. There is nothing wrong with any of these definitions except that one set of words is the language of one cultural value and the other set of words comes from a different cultural value.

Just as the test developer would find hustler unacceptable as an answer to describe a person who gathers and manipulates money, the culturally gifted child would not relate to the word entrepreneur.

The tragedy is that neither answer tells us anything more than we have a problem of language or definition. What intelligence tests must do is neutralize language that is culturally loaded in either direction.

It is not accidental that abstract thought is considered the highest level of thinking. It is without doubt the bread-winner for upper economic classes. It should be noted that what is being discussed has heavy political overtones. As Kamin concluded, the concept of "scientific evidence" often allows the researcher to step back and place his political and cultural biases under the guise of scientific fact. The cultural value set that economically and politically is in power determines what will be viewed as intelligence.

Binet's work in 1905 is an attempt to measure one's ability to minimally function in the culture of France. For Terman to transplant that idea into a multi-cultural society ignores the influence of those values and cultures other than the predominant one.

I repeat, third world educators must begin to define for society not only those who are qualified to work with third world children, but also how those children should be assessed. It is this writer's belief that as long as values are ignored, social class is ignored, I.Q. test data will continue to be the controlling factor

from which no allowances for the above are made in its interpretation. The problem is that social scientists do not now include this information in their assessment. What third world people must react to is that statistical treatment will yield a score regardless of how valid or how reliable the data. S. ificance at the .05 level fails to tell me that there were children who missed a test item at the definition level or the abstract level. It does not tell me the children who had unequal opportunities at educational resources in this country, and it does not tell me that abstract thinking was uncommon to them.

What it does tell me is that here is an objective set of facts that has been given sound statistical treatment and this set of information clearly states that science is a non-partial treatment of facts, and I as a social scientist can only be committed to truth. I need not refer back to Yerkes, Terman, and Goddard to explain my point. If we have to continue to determine who has superior mental capacities, which is only a speck in the sea of abilities of gifted children, then we must allow the child the fairness of discovering his abilities within the environment in which he functions.

The fundamental question educators should ask is: "based on comparable opportunities of income, cultural values, and race oppression in this society, how does one child in a group compare with the rest of the children in

that group? What we now do is to take an instrument that is certainly biased in the direction of European values and language and hold people responsible, for assimilation of the contents of an I.Q. test who have not had opportunities or exposure to the values we call I.Q. To administer one instrument to a large group such as a school district and not take into account economics, values and language, is the tragedy of convincing millions of children that that lowly place they find themselves in is where they belong.

The idea for an instrument like SEBS, the Stallings Environmentally Based Screen, is not the solution of problems we face in detecting who has exceptional abilities for the solution may be in no testing. In a sense it is a compromise between what we have and what we must determine as the new direction. Structure and design of the instrument is as traditional as any instrument in the field today. It begins with one's ability to remember information which is level one--recall. Depth of information and detail is the second level. The third and highest level is the manipulation of abstract thought. The non-traditional part of SEBS is that the school psychometrist at each individual site develops the content of the instrument from within the radius of the immediate community. The result is a standard instrument in which the contents are sensitive to the immediate environment.

When comparing how one school achieved as to another, factors such as economic level, values, and cultural

comparisons are weighted so that schools with low incomes of $5,000 are compared in one category and schools with medium incomes of $20,000 are compared in another category.

Program

Urban and rural districts are currently demanding alternative methods of assessing multi-culture children. A program for the culturally different gifted child is now being developed by the San Diego City Schools under the direction of Dr. Dave Hermanson and Ms. Nona Conners with this writer as the principal investigator.

Allowing students to progress from the known to the unknown through learning sequences allows the gifted child to break learning into bite-sized pieces appropriate to learning capacity. Existing school curriculums are so generalizable that their entire impact on the isolated child voids any reward for known information or experience the child brings to the classroom. The saturation of Sesame Street and other learning programs of the known or familiar environment creates a natural gap. Most pre-school children who enter public school have been successful in developing a skill base that has kept them alive for six years. The school curriculum begins at a developmental stage that ignores those six years. What it fails to do is include those experiences in early learning approaches. The result is to extinguish what has been successful for the child and begin the process of re-introduction into the school curriculum. What has

almost gone unnoticed is that this cycle creates a natural gap in our children's learning process. The gap is created from the experiences the children bring to the class (the known) and those that are in the school curriculum (the unknown). Only through a progressive sequential approach can that gap be closed. For example:

KNOWN	NATURAL	UNKNOWN
Experiences child brings to school	GAP	School Curriculum

It should be noted that as social class increases the school experience becomes less traumatic for the child. In middle and upper income families the home learning experiences are the same as those found in the school experience. For the low income child the process operates in complete reverse.

The natural gap must be progressively brought together through sequencing the child's early experience with the expectations of the school experience. Attacking that gap is the task of a program in San Diego City Schools. Next year a curriculum package will be piloted using this approach. Low income urban children who are gifted will be given the new curriculum approach. It is hoped that learning retention will increase but more importantly the psychological trauma to young children of not being able to bridge that gap will decrease.

Teachers must be trained to select those learning sequences and ways to plan activities or methods of moving from concrete to abstract thought. But most importantly from

answer-oriented teachers to question-asking teachers.

Many teachers have insufficient sociological and psychological educational training regarding the consequences of cultural deprivation. Therefore, the socialization process practiced in the schools requires children to depreciate themselves, their parents, their way of life and the values in which they have invested their feelings and emotional identification. When the child cannot transcend the values of the home and the school, social and psychological dynamics are such that children who in kindergarten are described as "curious, cute, affectionate, warm and independent" are described in the fifth grade as "alienated, withdrawn, angry, passive and apathetic." Deutch (1963) states that something has happened in this five-year interval for which the school has to accept some of the blame. Too often, the very bright, sensitive children suffer more severely than normal children.

The factors above are a sound indication that radical changes in how to develop programs for this population and enhance their learning experiences should begin as early as possible. Both the materials and the methods of teaching must be aligned with the psychological realities of socially deprived children. As Taba and Elkins in Teaching Strategies stated, "While all children learn better when the content of curriculum is turned to their experience as a point of departure, for culturally disadvantaged children this is a sine qua non if any motivation at all is to be generated." In two experimental projects, C. Stallings, 1971 and J. Stallings, 1975,

curriculum packages were developed based on utilization of the child's environment as a motivator for learning. Stallings, 1971, in an investigation of 300 children at Wisk School, Hartford, Connecticut, concluded that the experimental population exposed to curriculum materials which moved from the familiar to the unknown, produced significant differences from the control population who received the regular school curriculum. J. Stallings, 1975, replicated the study in San Diego, California. The results supported the 1971 findings that learning and retention is increased when potentially gifted children are allowed to begin the learning experience with familiar material and then progress to the unknown.

There is considerable evidence (Taba and Elkins, 1962) that gradually blending the child's immediate environment into the general school curriculum could decrease the radical personality changes from first grade to fifth grade that Deutsch describes. As earlier stated, a great mass of talented and gifted children remain bound in their social class. It is to this group of children that we must provide the kind of fertile educational environment where through discovery, assisted by enlightened facilitators as teachers, we can help nurture their capacities for self-determination, and the ability to communicate with their fellow human beings. Without these skills, their gifts are a waste. America's greatest resource is the minds of her children--not oil.

Definitions

I. Immediate to Unknown--allowing socially deprived children an opportunity to begin the learning process with tasks that include familiar learning material. For example, in teaching children to count, a local grocery store could be used as an initial introduction in how money is exchanged for services or goods. This step gives the student early success because he or she is familiar with the environment of the local store. Sesame Street has used this concept with some success. This is only the beginning, however, and the experience should not stop here. After the child completes the counting process within the local grocery store, he should be allowed to compare his neighborhood to how counting is accomplished across town, in other cities, states and countries. The learning gap created with existing curriculum is that Sesame Street is much too confined to the environment and that existing approaches to curriculum are almost too general. In curriculum planning for the average school district, it is impossible to decentralize curriculum. The learning gap created results in a curriculum approach that really is not specific to any one population, but general enough to apply to an entire school district. The general curriculum does an adequate job of meeting the needs of middle income children who can begin the learning process within the existing program. Disadvantaged children with limited exposure to language skills experience the social and psychological trauma of having a teacher who assumes that they

have been exposed to material contained in the curriculum guide. The expectations and disappointments of the teacher are often transferred into the psychological trauma in disadvantaged children. This phenomena fits the description of "sweet" in first grade to "hostile" in fifth grade.

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